

“Patrick Hartin ably reaches into the Pauline letters and illuminates the significant facets of Paul’s life in Christ. Readers will come away with a fresh appreciation of a way of living the gospel that has influenced every generation of Christians across the world. The grace and freedom Paul experienced in learning to live in Christ is also explored in a sampling of Christian witnesses who embody the power of the cross and resurrection, the transforming effect of grace, the unmerited gift of faith, and the value of a community of believers bound together in Christ. Perceptive and refreshing.”

—Cackie Upchurch, Director  
Little Rock Scripture Study

“*A Window into the Spirituality of Paul* is an excellent and stimulating synthetic presentation of Paul and his spirituality. Fr. Patrick Hartin’s perceptive guide to Paul’s spirituality treats major aspects of Paul’s spiritual vision that are indispensable for Christian life in Christ and his community of faith: the decisive significance of the cross and resurrection; God’s transforming grace; faith in Christ; humanity renewed in Christ; a community-oriented spirituality, lived in expectation of the end times. Hartin concludes his valuable study by showing how the four foundational pillars of Pauline spirituality—a new creation through the cross and resurrection of Christ, the transforming power of grace, the gift of faith and the response of good works, and the community of believers as the body of Christ—hold importance in our spirituality today.”

—John Navone, SJ  
Emeritus Professor of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome

“*A Window into the Spirituality of Paul* is no small peephole into the Apostle. It is, in fact, a large picture window that illuminates the central elements of Paul’s spirituality in ways that will be helpful to many people, especially to college students and lay Bible study groups. Consistent with his perspective that the essence of biblical spirituality includes both spiritual vision and everyday response to that vision, he develops a Pauline spirituality that attends to the individual’s relationship with Christ while also showing how that relationship can become a pattern for living. An important contribution of the study is the accessible, balanced, and clear way he states and explores Paul’s theology—and always with focus on the actual words of Paul. His emphases on the cross and resurrection, the transforming power of grace, faith and good works, the church as the Body of Christ, and humility allow him to write a ‘mini-theology’ of Paul that provides the basis for contemporary spirituality.”

—Rev. Walter F. Taylor, Jr.  
Ernest W. and Edith S. Ogram Professor of New Testament Studies  
Trinity Lutheran Seminary  
Columbus, Ohio

"In his newest book, Patrick Hartin guides us through an often challenging but ultimately rewarding look at the spirituality of Paul. Through a deeper understanding of this early believer's life and experience, we see it as a model for four later-day Christians and for us as well. With such guides as these, and as 'partners with Paul in grace', our spiritual lives can only be enriched."

—Judy Gritzmacher  
Oratory Center for Spirituality  
Rock Hill, South Carolina

"Those who found valuable insights from Fr. Hartin's *Exploring the Spirituality of the Gospels* will also find great value in this study of Paul. Following a somewhat similar format of this earlier book, Hartin continues to demonstrate how a greater understanding of the contexts within which Paul wrote allows modern readers better insights into how biblical texts might be best utilized by contemporary audiences. These insights would especially apply to those who have questions about Paul's Mediterranean life or are interested in examples of more recent lives that continue to sustain Paul's early examples from the Christian tradition."

—Ken Stenstrup  
Assistant Professor of Theology  
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

# A Window into the Spirituality of Paul

Patrick J. Hartin



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1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

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# Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction: Context for Exploring Paul's Spirituality 1

## **Part One**

### **Paul's Spiritual Encounter of the Risen Lord**

1 Paul's Call and Mission 11

## **Part Two**

### **Paul's Spiritual Vision: Reflections and Prolongation**

2 The Decisive Significance of the Cross and Resurrection 27

3 God's Transforming Grace 41

4 Faith in Christ 52

5 Humanity Renewed in Christ 67

6 Community-Oriented Spirituality 74

7 The Goal of the Spiritual Life 93

## **Part Three**

### **Paul's Spirituality: Incarnate and Alive Today**

8 Paul's Spirituality for Today 105

Conclusion 134

Notes 136



## Acknowledgments

This book, *A Window into the Spirituality of Paul*, as its title implies, focuses attention on the spiritual vision that emerges from the letters of St. Paul and his challenge to Christians to respond by their way of life. These two dimensions, spiritual vision and response, are what constitute the essence of biblical spirituality.

Most studies on Paul focus on him as a missionary and the theological message of his letters. Little attention has been devoted to an examination of his spirituality. This book responds to this neglect, most importantly by illustrating the perennial value of his spirituality and especially its relevance and significance for Christians today in the twenty-first century.

*A Window into the Spirituality of Paul* is written specifically with those in mind who are searching for a deeper understanding of the spiritual message of St. Paul and its relevance for their lives, in particular members of Bible study groups, as well as college students, and those reading the Bible on their own. This present work follows a similar approach to my previous study published by Liturgical Press, *Exploring the Spirituality of the Gospels* (2011). It is my firm hope that this new work will provide a deeper insight into the spiritual vision of Paul's writings and will offer readers direction and guidance for their spiritual lives today.

I wish to express my enormous thanks to Cackie Upchurch, Director of Little Rock Scripture Study, for her guidance and suggestions throughout the writing of this manuscript. As editor, she has been an enormous guide and partner in this work. Not only did she meticulously edit the entire work, but she also provided endless suggestions and comments that have enhanced it. I am indeed indebted to her for the endless hours of painstaking work spent improving this manuscript. I thank her as well for her patience in seeing this project to its completion.

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Finally, I dedicate this book in gratitude and appreciation to my many students in Bible study groups and college classes. Thank you for inspiring and energizing me with your insights, questions, and enthusiasm for discovering the meaning of God's word for our lives over the course of the past five decades.

Patrick J. Hartin

Spokane, WA

Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, January 25, 2015

# *Introduction*

## Context for Exploring Paul's Spirituality

Paul is unique in the pages of the New Testament. Of all the people appearing in the Bible, none is known to us as well as Saul/Paul of Tarsus. Thirteen letters are attributed to him in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> In more than two-thirds of the Acts of the Apostles (chaps 9–28), Paul is the central figure guiding the establishment and growth of early Christian communities. Practically half the New Testament, then, bears Paul's stamp and influence.

Paul also holds a unique position at the foundation of Christian Spirituality. With the gospels, we have writings from four individual followers of Jesus who have recorded their insights into the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth. In the case of Paul, there is a marked difference. He witnesses the life-transforming experience he had on the road to Damascus that gave his life new purpose and direction. Through the grace of this encounter, Paul illuminates the spiritual meaning of the cross and resurrection for the lives of second-generation Christians. With the gospels, we have a very limited amount of material; with Paul, we have thirteen letters and the Acts of the Apostles to guide our examination. Not only do we have his words, but from the very nature of his correspondence we gain more insight into Paul's character as well as his personal response to the transformative power of Jesus Christ in his life. We can view his spirituality in action.

### **What Is Christian Spirituality?**

While "spirituality" has roots within the framework of Christianity, today the term has branched out to encompass much more. In more recent times, spirituality has grown in popularity within society and

has broadened its perspective to such an extent that it is sometimes very difficult to define its meaning. From the influences of psychology and the social sciences, spirituality tends to embrace whatever brings personal well-being and human growth.

In its widest sense, spirituality refers to the life of the spirit as opposed to the material aspect of the human person. As defined in the dictionary, *spiritual* pertains “to the spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature.”<sup>2</sup> In its origins the word spirit (*ruah* in Hebrew; *pneuma* in Greek or *spiritus* in Latin) refers to the breath of life or the human spirit that finds its ultimate origin in God. The second creation story in the book of Genesis presents a graphic picture of God as the Master Craftsman who takes soil from the ground and breathes life into his creation and makes of it a living being. “The LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). In an analogous way in the New Testament, God’s Spirit is communicated to the believer who is recreated by the grace and life of God. The writings of Paul draw attention to this twofold understanding of the spirit: the human spirit and God’s Spirit. God’s grace transforms the human spirit, one’s very being. Paul’s conclusions to his letters often make this distinction between the human spirit and the divine spirit. Concluding his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Phil 4:23).

Biblical scholar Sandra Schneiders gives one of the best descriptions of spirituality: “In short, spirituality refers to the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one possesses.”<sup>3</sup> This understanding of spirituality conforms to the insights of the social sciences whereby the way in which the human person perceives reality will have a decided effect on the way in which life is experienced and interpreted. From the Christian perspective this means that Christian spirituality is defined above all by the person of Jesus Christ. His person and message animate the experience of Christian life and give it meaning and direction.

Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez has provided an interesting insight into the development of a spiritual tradition that is applicable to the spirituality of Paul.<sup>4</sup> He points to three significant moments in the development of a spiritual tradition. In a previous book, *Exploring the Spirituality of the Gospels*, I applied his thought to the gospels.<sup>5</sup> These moments—the experience of encounter, reflection, and prolongation—are equally applicable to Paul’s spiritual thought.

*Experience of Encounter:* In Christianity, every spiritual tradition begins with an encounter with the Lord Jesus. This encounter marks a turning point in a person's life. Paul's life is determined by his encounter with the risen Lord on his journey to Damascus: "[Saul] fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' He said, 'Who are you, sir?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:4-5). This encounter changed Paul's life dramatically. In his encounter with the risen Lord, Paul is given a mission, "[T]his man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15-16).

*Reflection:* After experiencing the Lord Jesus, Paul needed time to reflect on what had happened to him and make sense of this encounter: "I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus" (Gal 1:16-17). Before speaking with others, Paul needed to understand for himself the meaning of this experience. As a student of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), Paul's reflection turned to the word of God, the Torah, and the Prophets to understand how to explain that the crucified and risen Jesus whom he had encountered was now identified as the Messiah of the Scriptures. This turn to personal reflection is part of the process as Gutiérrez says, "To reflect theologically on a spiritual experience means to work through it by relating it to the word of the Lord, to thinking of one's own age, and to other ways of understanding the following of Jesus."<sup>6</sup> Paul's spiritual reflection begins with his own experience that is read in the light of the Scriptures and traditions of the people of Israel. His reflection enabled him to reach new insights in understanding and ways of acting.

*Prolongation:* Paul's preaching and his letters were the means by which he shared his reflection with others. Through his preaching, as he journeyed from Palestine through Asia Minor to Europe, Paul shared his understanding of the cross and resurrection in light of the Scriptures. His preaching brought many (from the world of Israel as well as from the world of Greece and Rome) to embrace his message and form communities of believers in the Lord Jesus. Through his letters, Paul instructed these communities deeper in his faith in the Lord Jesus and how this should impact their lives. Faith and action go hand in hand. These letters of Paul are invaluable because they speak not only to Paul's first-century audience but they address us as well. In effect, the letters of Paul hand on to us today Paul's spiritual legacy, his spiritual thoughts.

In the twenty-first century, the letters of Paul are more than just past records of his correspondence with the early centers of Christianity he had founded. For Christians, they are *documents of faith*. Throughout his letters Paul hands on his own experience, his reflection, and the transforming power of the presence of God in the Lord Jesus. Paul's intention in his letters is to bring about a *faith response* in the lives of his readers. As with all the New Testament writers, Paul communicates to his readers his own spiritual vision of Jesus and challenges them to respond to this vision in their way of life. "By *vision*, I understand the unifying perspective or picture the biblical writer envisages regarding Jesus and its implications for the life of believers."<sup>7</sup>

These two dimensions of *spiritual vision* and *response* are what constitute the essence of biblical spirituality. Both aspects are clearly evident in the writings and teaching of Paul. In the first instance, Paul lays out the foundation of his faith that rests on his belief in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. He gives a deeper reflection on and understanding of who Jesus is as Lord, Son of God, and Messiah. In the second instance, Paul draws out the implications for believers and the response they are called to give to this belief through their way of life and their actions. The clearest example of the interconnection of these dimensions can be seen in Philippians 2:5-11. Here Paul uses a hymn that is sung in the worship life of the Christian communities that reflects on the person of Jesus Christ. Although he "was in the form of God," he was willing to let go ("emptied himself") of his "equality with God" in order to take on the human form of "a slave" or servant. His humility or emptying went even further to embrace the cross in obedience to the will of his Father. Paul uses this theological reflection on the person of Jesus Christ to instruct believers. As Paul says when he begins this section, "Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus" (2:5). Paul calls his readers to emulate the humility of Jesus Christ. By taking on the form of slave or servant, Jesus Christ showed that his path through suffering led to exaltation by the Father in the resurrection. The lives of Jesus' followers embrace the same path. Faith in Jesus Christ leads to adopting and imitating the same path of life.

## **Outline of the Book**

Because of Paul's many writings, a richer and deeper insight into his spirituality can be gained than from any other writer in the Bible. This study views Paul's spirituality as a whole while still paying attention to the context of the specific letter when examining particular texts. We wish to gain insight into the foundational key aspects of Paul's under-

standing of Jesus, his spiritual vision, as well as the spiritual response he calls his readers to embrace in following Christ Jesus.

In structuring this book, I have consciously followed the three-part development of a tradition that Gustavo Gutiérrez identified.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, it is important to note that Paul has not provided a complete spirituality. I am drawing from significant spiritual insights to which Paul gives attention throughout his letters. Further, in the prolongation of Paul's spiritual tradition, Christians over the centuries have embraced aspects of Paul's spiritual vision within the context of their world and time period. In the final section of the book, some Christian witnesses, whose lives demonstrate aspects of Paul's spirituality, will be examined briefly.

In Part One: Paul's Spiritual Encounter of the Risen Lord, attention is given to Paul's Call and Mission (chap 1). The question "Who is Paul?" situates Paul in the context of his world and the spiritual tradition of the people of Israel. At the same time, Paul is uniquely placed as an Israelite who was born outside Palestine in the Diaspora. As such, Paul was steeped in the culture and language of Greece and Rome as well as in the faith of his own people. He stood as it were with feet in two worlds. An examination of Paul's call on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) shows how much this call transformed his life. From persecutor and archenemy of the followers of Jesus, Paul became the most ardent of Jesus' followers. In this remarkable encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul received a call with a mission to spread Jesus' message to the peoples of the world. I trace Paul's response to his call and mission as reflected in his three missionary journeys. Paul established communities throughout Asia Minor and into Europe, where followers of Jesus could learn about and experience the person of the Lord Jesus. For some fifteen-to-twenty years Paul tirelessly fulfilled his mission to the Gentiles with enthusiasm and joy. His fourth and final journey was as a prisoner to Rome, where his life ended in martyrdom.

In Part Two: Paul's Spiritual Vision: Reflections and Prolongation (chaps 2-7), Gutiérrez's insights continue to shape the exploration into Paul's spiritual tradition. The spiritual experience of encounter leads to reflection and then to a prolongation of the message through Paul's preaching and his letters. I take seriously the definition of biblical spirituality expressed previously as "The search for believers to integrate life through the spiritual vision of those biblical writings that witness to an encounter with God in the person of Jesus and the response required by their transformed life."<sup>9</sup> Attention here is devoted to a thoughtful exploration of how Paul's call both transformed and influenced his

spiritual response and way of life and how Jesus' followers are called to respond in a similar manner. Chapter two, *The Decisive Significance of the Cross and Resurrection*, explores Paul's foundational conviction arising out of his encounter with the risen Jesus. For three years following his spiritual encounter, Paul reflected on his experience in the desert of Arabia and in Damascus (Gal 1:23), drawing out its significance. The essence of his belief centered completely on the crucified Jesus whom Paul experienced as alive and now acknowledged as the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, to whom the Hebrew Scriptures pointed. This insight provided the cornerstone for Paul's spiritual vision and the way of life that he preached. This prompts the question for every reader: "In what sense is Jesus Christ the center and foundation of one's own spirituality?"

Chapter 3, *God's Transforming Grace*, examines Paul's reflections on his own experience that reveal a deep sense of how God's grace has transformed him from an unworthy recipient into a great apostle: "For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective" (1 Cor 15:9-10). This transforming grace gives Paul an insight into the role that suffering plays in his life. A type of identification takes place between himself and the person of Christ. The proclamation of the cross of Christ appears to be a "stumbling block to Jews and a foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23). The consequence for Christians of all ages is to embrace Paul's spiritual vision that sees God's grace as transforming every human weakness in those who are open and respond to God's grace-filled initiative.

Chapter 4, *Faith in Christ*, explores Paul's understanding of his new life in Christ in terms of the covenantal relationship that God had established. As with the covenant with Abraham, this new covenant embraces all people, not one exclusive nation. Paul contrasts his present spiritual way of life in Christ to that of his former way of life. Previously, Paul had placed great importance on his status as a member of the people of Israel and his faithful adherence to the Torah and its implementation. Now, through his encounter with the risen Lord, this new covenant relationship with God brings him true freedom through Christ's grace.

Chapter 5, *Humanity Renewed in Christ*, explores Paul's anthropological understanding of the spiritual life. Paul contrasts Christ with Adam in order to highlight the saving grace that came to humanity through Christ. Paul's reflection on Adam shows the state of the world

into which Christ came, "Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned" (Rom 5:12). Christ as the New Adam came to liberate humanity from the bondage of sin by inaugurating a new creation (Rom 5:12-21). All who accept him in faith and baptism become a new creature in Christ. Paul describes the inner conflict within the human heart from which Jesus Christ has freed us by his grace (7:14-25). The spiritual consequence for believers is that they are healed through the grace of Christ from this situation of evil in the world and in our human nature.

Chapter 6, *Community-Oriented Spirituality*, examines the role of the Spirit and the Body of Christ. For Paul, entry into relationship with Christ and rebirth as a new creation take place through the Holy Spirit. The worship that is offered God in Christ is a spiritual worship: "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1). The Church is understood as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31). Ethical virtues and demands flow from the understanding that as believers we are all members of the Body of Christ. Significant insights for our spiritual journey are addressed. Paul's great contribution is that the foundation and source of all spirituality for the Christian lies in the life of the Spirit.

In chapter 7, *The Goal of the Spiritual Life*, attention is given to Paul's eschatological spirituality. With the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christians believed that the end times had already begun. The future resurrection had already broken into our world. Paul's spirituality is understood within this context. The resurrection of Jesus is an indication that what has happened to Jesus will happen to all of us in the age to come. It is a foretaste of what is in store for us who believe. Paul's spirituality gives us the assurance that our journey of life is a journey with Christ and to Christ. The future does not instill fear in us but rather confidence and joy in what lies ahead.

The last part of this book, *Paul's Spirituality: Incarnate and Alive Today*, draws attention to many significant dimensions of Paul's spirituality. Among these aspects, four foundational pillars or convictions have emerged that hold significance for us today: the cross and the resurrection of Christ (a new creation in Christ); the transforming power of grace; the gift of faith and the response of good works; and the community of believers as the Body of Christ. The final chapter, *Paul's Spirituality for Today* (chapter 8), reflects briefly upon these four

foundational pillars of Paul's spirituality insofar as they hold importance for our spirituality today. In discussing their significance, this chapter illustrates, by way of example from the lives of certain individuals (St. Kateri Tekakwitha; Fr. Stanley Rother; Mother Antonia Brenner; and St. Katharine Drexel), how Christians lived out these pillars of Paul's spirituality.

This exploration through the spiritual vision of Paul and the way it is illustrated in the lives of these heroes of faith has one intention: to show the spiritual importance and relevance for readers today. In every example, God's grace is their foundation. God's grace continues to guide and empower them to lead lives in relation to and in imitation of the cross and resurrection. As with St. Paul, so with the lives of all Christians, the incarnate risen Lord is at the heart of their endeavors. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Gal 6:18).

Part One

**Paul's Spiritual Encounter  
of the Risen Lord**



## Paul's Call and Mission

*"Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ . . . so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles."*

(Gal 1:11-12, 16)

In the history of Christianity, after the person of Jesus, St. Paul—teacher, missionary, and martyr—is the most influential figure. Every age turns to him for inspiration and guidance. Our exploration of his spirituality begins with the realization that Paul, his letters, and his message emerge from a particular time and historical context. Without such an understanding of Paul's world, it would not be possible to attain an accurate insight into his spirituality. Paul's spiritual message and vision first had meaning for his own time and world. As Christians we believe that the Bible is God's word that speaks to Christians at every age and place, so Paul's spirituality is meaningful for every subsequent generation. Paul is not simply a figure from the past. He is also our spiritual guide and teacher, and his spiritual vision must become incarnate in the twenty-first century.

### **Who Is Paul?**

Spirituality reflects the context out of which it emerged. The same is true of Paul's spirituality. To understand Paul's spirituality it is necessary first to situate Paul in the context of his own world. We begin with a brief overview of the person Paul, his travels, and his place within the framework of early Christianity. Paul, or Saul,<sup>1</sup> as he was known before he became a follower of Jesus, came from the city Tarsus, in south-central Turkey, twenty kilometers inland from the Mediterranean Sea. Tarsus had a rich and interesting history dating back over three thousand years. Very little remains today of the ancient city as the modern-day city, Cumhuriyet Alani, is built over its ruins. At the time of Paul,

Tarsus was an important commercial center. Located at the mouth of the River Tarsus (or Cydnus in antiquity), the city of Tarsus had tremendous commercial importance providing a meeting point for both trade and sea routes that connected the interior of Asia with the Mediterranean Sea. Tarsus was also the administrative capital for the whole region.

Many interesting historical episodes are connected with Tarsus's history. The Roman General Pompey brought the city of Tarsus under the domination of Rome, and in 66 BC the people of Tarsus were granted Roman citizenship. Marcus Tullius Cicero, the famous Roman Senator and philosopher, was Proconsul here in 51 BC. In 41 BC Cleopatra met Marc Antony here for the first time. The "Tarsus Gate of Cleopatra" (or the "Sea Gate") still stands today. According to the legends, Cleopatra sailed up the Cydnus River disguised as Aphrodite and entered this gate on her way to meet Marc Antony. Here Marc Antony and Cleopatra built their fleet that was later destroyed by Octavian (Augustus Caesar) in 31 BC.

In this historically significant and commercially important city, Paul was born (Acts 22:3) around 8 BC, a "Hebrew of Hebrew parentage" (Phil 3:5) and a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-28). At home in three different cultures (Grecian, Roman, and Palestinian), Paul spoke Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic fluently. With such a background, one can immediately see God's hand behind the choice of Paul as the one to spread Jesus' message beyond Palestine's boundaries.

As a young man, Paul moved to Jerusalem to study his faith more intensely and became a student of Rabbi Gamaliel, a nephew and student of the famous Rabbi Hillel. There is no evidence that Paul was in Jerusalem when Jesus was put to death, but he was there when Stephen was stoned, as the Acts of the Apostles narrates, ". . . they began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul . . . Now Saul was consenting to his execution" (7:58-8:1). Paul's presence is placed in Jerusalem around AD 34-35.

Through his studies under Gamaliel, Paul became a learned rabbi in his own right. He understood his faith in light of the traditions of the Pharisees ("in observance of the law a Pharisee" [Phil 3:5]). His commitment to his faith led him to view the followers of Jesus with intense hostility. For Paul, they were distorting the traditions and heritage of Israel. He responded by persecuting them (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; and Phil 3:6). What exactly his persecution entailed, though, is unknown. However, Acts tells us that Paul asked the High Priest in Jerusalem "for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men

or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains" (9:2). On this journey Paul had an encounter with the risen Lord that gave his life new meaning and direction.<sup>2</sup> He was as committed and enthusiastic for his newfound faith as he had been for his earlier faith. As Paul had journeyed as a Pharisee to Damascus to defend his faith, so now he journeyed throughout the ancient world to spread a knowledge and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ.

## **Paul, Apostle and Missionary**

In relationship to the heritage of Israel, Paul was defined as a Pharisee; in relationship to Jesus' followers, Paul is identified as an apostle and missionary. Paul is a true apostle, as the name itself signifies, "one who is sent" by the risen Jesus, with a mission (Acts 9:15). Paul's apostolic work breaks down into three defined journeys together with a fourth journey to Rome as a prisoner.

### *First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1–14:28) [46–49 AD]*

After his call, Paul spent three years in the desert of Arabia reflecting on his encounter with the risen Lord. He visited Peter and James briefly in Jerusalem and returned to his home town of Tarsus. From there Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch to help him in his ministry. In the context of a liturgical celebration, the community, under the inspiration of the Spirit, sent Barnabas, Paul, and John Mark (Barnabas's cousin) on a church-sponsored outreach from Antioch to spread the gospel message beyond Syria–Palestine (Acts 13:1-3). Barnabas was in charge of the mission. Acts gives a detailed description of the journey: From the seaport of Seleucia in Syria, they sailed to the island of Cyprus. After crossing the island, they sailed on to Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), where they visited the cities of Attalia, Perga, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. In all these cities Paul's message was fiercely rejected by his own people but was well received by the Gentile majority. Retracing their steps, they returned home to Antioch in Syria. In the course of the journey many Gentiles became followers of Jesus. The Church of the Gentiles emerged.

### *Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) [49 AD]*

The incorporation of believers from the Gentile world sparked a heated discussion within the church in Jerusalem. "What was required for believers from the Gentile world to become members of the church?" The Jerusalem church demanded that they should abide

by all the obligations, laws, and way of life of the people of Israel. In contrast, Paul's view was that Jesus' death and resurrection had freed his followers from the stipulations of the Mosaic Law. After much discussion (Acts 15), the apostles decided that the prescriptions of the Law of Moses should not be imposed upon the Gentiles, including the ritual of circumcision for males (Acts 15:6-29). Through baptism they became Christians and belonged to Christ. One's whole life was meant to be led in relationship to Christ. The apostles wrote a letter explaining to the churches their unanimous agreement. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with the letter. This decision was momentous for the future direction of the Christian church.

*Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36–18:22) [49–52 AD]*

After a dispute concerning John Mark, Paul and Barnabas separated. Choosing Silas as his traveling companion, Paul went overland to visit those Christian communities he had founded in Asia Minor: Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra. While in Lystra, Paul was joined by a young man, Timothy (the son of a Jewish mother and a pagan father), who would become an influential person in the early church. Paul had Timothy circumcised so that they could continue their mission of preaching, first to the Jews in their synagogues and then to the Gentiles. They traveled across central Asia Minor and reached the coastal town of Troas, where Paul had a dream of a Macedonian begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Paul interpreted this dream to mean that God was calling them to cross over and preach the Good News on the continent of Europe for the first time. Philippi, the first church established there, was to become a very vibrant community. From Philippi, Paul journeyed through Greece establishing a number of Christian communities, such as Thessalonica. On reaching Athens, the cultural capital of the Mediterranean world, Paul engaged in discussion with some leading Greek philosophers. However, when Paul preached of the cross and resurrection, the Athenians were unable to accept his central message and walked away. Finally, Paul reached Corinth, where he stayed for a year and a half. In Corinth, Paul was brought before the Roman proconsul of the Senatorial Province of Achaia, Gallio, on charges that he was promoting an unlawful religion. This event is noteworthy as it provides a reliable chronological detail. An inscription has been found in Delphi that mentions this Gallio and identifies him as proconsul in Corinth during the years 51 and 53. This evidence dates Paul's stay in Corinth to these years (51–52). Hearing about concerns back in Thes-

salonica, Paul writes a letter explaining aspects of the Christian faith that were causing confusion. So began Paul's epistolary career. From Corinth, Paul sailed home to Palestine. He landed in the port city of Caesarea Maritima and went up to visit the church of Jerusalem before returning to his home church of Antioch.

*Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23–21:16) [53–58 AD]*

Paul started out again from Antioch intent on visiting the city of Ephesus, capital of the Roman Province of Asia. During his three-year stay there (Acts 20:31), Paul wrote a number of letters (such as the two letters to the Corinthians, Philemon, and Philippians). The famous temple of Artemis, the Artemision, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, stood proudly in the city of Ephesus. Worshipers came here from all over Greece and the ancient world. Paul's preaching against the worship of idols caused a great disturbance in Ephesus and forced him to leave. He journeyed throughout Greece revisiting those churches he had established on his second journey. He stayed in Corinth again for three months, during which time he wrote the letters to the Romans and Galatians. On his return journey to Palestine, Paul arrived at the port city of Miletus and called the elders from Ephesus to join him there. In his farewell speech, Paul intimated that he would not see them again (20:25). He sailed home to Palestine, disembarked at the port of Caesarea Maritima and traveled up to Jerusalem, where he visited the temple. His presence caused a riot as he was accused of bringing some pagans into the temple area. The Romans intervened and arrested Paul. Paul remained in prison for two years.

After invoking his privilege as a Roman citizen, he appealed to the Roman Emperor Nero to hear his case. He was sent to Rome with a centurion to accompany him. After a difficult sea journey involving being shipwrecked off the island of Malta (27:1–28:16), Paul arrived in Rome, where he stayed under house arrest for two years awaiting trial (28:30). At this point Luke ends his narrative of the Acts of the Apostles. Nothing is said about the outcome of his trial (28:30-31). There are legends that narrate that Paul was released and journeyed farther to Spain. Historical evidence clearly points to Paul ending his final years in Rome, where he suffered martyrdom under Nero Caesar around 64 A.D.

This outline of Paul's life and mission, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, reveals a person dedicated to handing on the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Greek and Roman worlds. This was Paul's total preoccupation: "All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share

in it" (1 Cor 9:23). Paul demonstrates a spiritual vision inspired by a love for and relationship to the Lord. What is so remarkable about Paul's spirituality is his commitment to the Gospel and his willingness to endure every obstacle in the process of handing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the peoples of the world. As Paul testifies in his letter to the Philippians,

. . . I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient. I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me. (4:11-13)

Paul's spiritual vision challenges Christians to embrace a similar spirituality that is centered on a relationship with Christ that gives our lives meaning and provides direction and strength amid the vicissitudes of life.

### **Paul's Call as an Apostle**

We return to reflect more fully on Paul's spiritual experience of the risen Jesus that turned his life around and gave him a totally new perspective. Everything that previously had meaning for him now was of little significance, especially his faith as a true Israelite:

[But] whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things, and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . . (Phil 3:7-8)

"That I may gain Christ": Paul's relationship with the risen Christ empowers his entire life. Two different sources in the New Testament give accounts of Paul's total transformation: Luke (in his Acts of the Apostles) and Paul (in his Letter to the Galatians).

*Luke's Account (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21; and 26:4-23)*

Luke's narrative appears on three occasions in the Acts of the Apostles in relatively much the same way (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21; and 26:4-23). The first version is narrated in the third person, while the other two are expressed in the first person by Paul. The first version (Acts 9:1-19) is the more extensive account and will be the focus. Told in a very colorful and detailed way, it appeals graphically to the imagina-

tion: On the road to Damascus in the early 30s, a dramatic event occurred that made Paul see his life in a new light. Saul (as the text refers to him) experiences a bright light and a voice identifying itself, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting . . ." (9:5). Saul loses his sight and is led into Damascus, where a disciple, Ananias (who had received a vision from the Lord), laid his hands on him and said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (9:17). Scales fall from Saul's eyes and he regains his sight and is baptized. Ananias communicates to Saul the mission that the Lord had given him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15-16).

There is so much local detail in the story (such as the name of Ananias, the name of the street "called Straight," the house of Judas, and Paul's city of origin, Tarsus) that scholars think Luke's account comes from a source in Syria itself.

But, let us not get distracted by all the details of the story. It is the meaning behind this account that is significant.<sup>3</sup> The way the story is told enables the reader to get to the heart of what this experience is about. Saul encounters the risen Jesus as a bright light and in this encounter his life is turned around. He sees and understands things from a new perspective. Saul's physical blindness is a symbol for his interior blindness to the person of Christ that was at the core of his being and how only the light that is Christ could penetrate his depths and transform his life. Saul's response was to accept the gift of the Holy Spirit that Ananias offered and be baptized, enabling the light of Christ to transform his interior darkness so that he could see not just physically but, more importantly, spiritually.

Commenting on this passage, Pope Benedict XVI made an important insight, "In the ancient Church Baptism was also called 'illumination,' because this sacrament gives light; it truly makes one see."<sup>4</sup> As Christians we believe that baptism, as with each of the sacraments, is an encounter with the risen Christ. Paul's encounter was foundational: he experienced the person of Christ in a way that transformed the depths of his being. Paul's conversion did not come as a result of logical arguments or from personal study. His conversion was the result of an encounter with a real person, the risen Jesus.

This event is generally referred to as "Paul's conversion" because his way of living, thinking, and interacting with the world was transformed

in a fundamentally different way. But a deeper insight of the nature of this event emerges when we pay close attention to Ananias's declaration to Paul, "This man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, to suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15). God has chosen Paul for a mission: to preach the message of Christ to the nations of the world. Paul received *a call from God that carried with it a mission* in the tradition of the great prophets of the Old Testament (for example, Isa 6:1-10 and Jer 1:4-10). The spiritual implications of this call are significant: his call is not for himself, but for others. While the nature of a conversion looks inward and refers to the individual life, the nature of a call centers on others. Paul is the Lord's instrument to extend belief in Christ Jesus throughout the nations of the world. God is using Paul's gifts, his background, in service to the world. This bears significance for all Christians: baptism in Christ is not only a personal encounter with Christ but brings with it the mission to spread this experience, knowledge, and love of the Lord to others.

*Paul's Account (Gal 1:11-24)*

Paul narrates his call in the context of his defense of the Gospel he preaches. He refers to his encounter with the risen Lord to avoid the accusation that his message is based upon human sources and hence is unreliable. Paul counters this thought by stating unambiguously that his message comes from God:

Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. . . . But when [God] who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles . . .  
(Gal 1:12, 15-16)

Paul does not provide a narrative description of the event as Luke does. Paul's life and ministry rested upon God's revelation of the risen Lord. A relationship with Jesus Christ began through this encounter with the risen Christ. One of the major elements of Paul's spirituality is his stress on God's action, not his own. God is in the forefront. Paul contrasts his former way of life to his life now led in Christ (Phil 3:4-11). Formerly, through his own actions, Paul had excelled in his faith "beyond many of my contemporaries among my race" (Gal 1:14) and that led him to persecute Jesus' followers. But God had other plans. Now Paul's life is led in relationship with Christ.

The language of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah is clearly in Paul's mind when he speaks of his call through the images of God setting him apart and calling him from his mother's womb for the mission of preaching to the nations:

Before birth the LORD called me,  
from my mother's womb he gave me my name. . . .  
I will make you a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.  
(Isa 49:1, 6)

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
before you were born I dedicated you,  
a prophet to the nations I appointed you. (Jer 1:5)

Two central views are connected: God has called Paul for the purpose of preaching Christ to the nations of the world. As the two prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah demonstrate, God had this plan prior to Paul's conception. The call was not for himself, but for his mission: to preach the message to the nations of the world (the Gentiles). The call is not self-centered but truly "other-centered." Like the prophets, Paul speaks about "the call" God gave him, rather than about a "conversion." His call is for a mission. To prepare him for this mission, God revealed his Son to him (Gal 1:16). Paul is convinced that this Jesus, who was crucified, is now alive. To make sense of this experience, Paul retires into Arabia to reflect alone on his encounter with the risen Lord against the background of his own Israelite faith (1:7). After three years he "went up to Jerusalem to confer with Cephas [Peter] and remained with him for fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles, only James the brother of the Lord" (1:18-19).

Paul alludes to this encounter with the risen Jesus elsewhere on a number of occasions throughout his letters. In discussing the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul hands on the tradition about Jesus' resurrection, a tradition that he himself had received, "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received. . . ." (1 Cor 15:3). This tradition professed the central beliefs of Jesus' followers: he died for our sins as the Hebrew Scriptures had foretold; he was buried and was raised on the third day. As further proof that Jesus was alive, the tradition added that certain witnesses could testify that they had encountered Jesus, such as Peter (Cephas), the Twelve, five hundred believers at the same time, and so on. To this traditional list, Paul adds himself: "Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted

the church of God" (1 Cor 15:8-9). Paul stresses again that God's grace transformed his life into an apostle and this same grace enabled him to minister as he did (1 Cor 15:10-11).

The same essential thoughts appear in the opening of the letter to the Romans, where Paul writes about himself by way of introduction:

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God . . . Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles . . .  
(Rom 1:1, 4-5)

What an extraordinary introduction to a letter! It captures the essence of Paul's transformation and mission. Paul speaks of his call to be an apostle with the mission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. The translation of the New American Bible, "the grace of apostleship" does not capture the force of the original Greek text that reads "we have received grace and apostleship" (1:5). The grace Paul refers to is his total transformation through his encounter with the risen Christ. The consequence of this transformation was to receive a call to become an apostle to the nations.

A further reference Paul makes to his encounter with the risen Lord occurs in 1 Corinthians 9:1, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" Paul presumes they have heard about and know the details of this encounter with the risen Jesus.

### *Spiritual Significance of These Two Accounts for Paul*

*Encounter with the Risen Lord:* Paul's witness together with the Acts of the Apostles testifies that Paul's transformed life stems from his encounter with the risen Lord. This experience transformed him from one of the earliest and strongest persecutors of the followers of Christ to one of their strongest proponents. Now Paul lived his life "in Christ." From that moment this relationship permeated his life.

*Call and Mission:* Reflecting on this encounter, Paul situates his life within the long trajectory of the call of the great prophets, such as Jeremiah, whom God had designated from conception to be his spokesperson to the people of Israel (Jer 1:3). Paul refers to his own life in a similar way—he is called to be God's instrument to the nations of the world, "But when [God], who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace . . ." (Gal 1:15). Paul's encounter, call, and apostleship all show that the call is not for Paul alone but rather for him to be an instrument of the risen Lord to the world.

Why did Paul present his encounter in terms of a call, not of a conversion? The verb “convert” stresses the human initiative in undertaking this change. But for Paul the foundation always is and remains the action of God’s grace, not his own human actions. In the case of Paul, his transformation did not come about through his own power but from an encounter with the risen Lord, as he testifies.

Further, the term “conversion” implies that a person changes from one religion or belief system to another. Paul never views his transformation as leading him into a new religion. On the contrary, he sees the message of Jesus, his crucifixion and his resurrection, bringing to fulfillment the hopes and expectations of God’s revelation and encounter with the people of Israel. For Paul the church is heir to the traditions of Israel; it is “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). As Matthew’s Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). “The law and the prophets” refers to the Sacred Writings of the people of Israel, what Christians term “the Old Testament.” Jesus’ fulfillment of the Old Testament means bringing the understanding of God’s Revelation of God’s self and God’s will for humanity to a culmination, to show the authentic understanding of the past and how it has been leading to him. Jesus gives it an authentic interpretation as seen from his response to the scribe’s question, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” (Mark 12:28-34). Jesus takes two commandments found in the Torah (the Law), namely, the love of God (Deut 6:4-5) and the love of Neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18), and establishes them as the guiding principles for every action. Jesus places all the rules and laws of the Old Testament under the light of love.

Throughout his life Paul had the hope of leading his fellow Israelites to an understanding of Jesus in relationship to the traditions of the past. Paul agonizes over the fact that his own people have not accepted Jesus:

. . . I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kin according to the flesh. They are Israelites; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises, theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen. (Rom 9:2-5)

In subsequent chapters (Rom 9–11), Paul tries to answer this troubling question: “What will happen to the people of Israel at the end of time if they have not accepted Christ?” How does this square with the

basic conviction of the Torah (Law) that God promises to the people of Israel that God will never abandon them? Ultimately Paul comes to the conclusion in chapter eleven that although the Gentiles have been grafted onto the olive tree (that is Israel), those dead branches from the olive tree will be grafted back on again (11:24).

The separation between "Judaism" and "Christianity" became a reality only much later, long after Paul's death (ca. AD 64), following the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the expulsion of the followers of Jesus from the synagogues (AD 90). Two separate religions emerged from the ashes of the temple and City of Jerusalem.

*Illumination:* The image the Acts of the Apostles uses of "a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him" (Acts 9:3) helps the reader appreciate the spiritual significance. Light overcomes darkness and makes it possible to see. Light now penetrates the mind of Paul and enables him to see spiritually. Paul's insight in this encounter stems from the grace of the risen Lord. The light of Christ works in his mind and heart enabling him to see with a perspective different from the way he had been able to see previously. Paul, as previously indicated, was steeped in both the traditions of Israel as well as the Hellenistic world. Paul turns the light of Christ onto his own traditions as an Israelite as well as onto the richness of the intellectual world of Rome and Greece. With God's grace he is able to preach his message first to the people of Israel and after that to the Gentiles.

*Corporate Unity:* Paul realized that in addition to his personal relationship with Christ there is also a bond on a horizontal level with those who believe in Christ, the Body of Christ. His baptism is a sign of his incorporation into the Body of Christ. Aspects of Paul's spiritual and corporate vision are captured so well in the account of Acts. Baptism incorporates the believer into the Body of Christ, and the words of the risen Christ to Paul on the road to Damascus express this bond: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4). The risen Jesus identifies himself with those whom Paul is persecuting. These powerful words contain an essential awareness of what will become one of Paul's foundational spiritual insights: through faith, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit, the believer is brought into a spiritual bond both with Christ and with all believers. This spiritual bond Paul refers to as "the Body of Christ":

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves

or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:12-13)

Paul's encounter changed his life and influenced the future direction of early Christianity. Paul's mission was directed to bringing all people into relationship with Jesus Christ and his message. This became the foundation for all his missionary journeys. This spiritual vision forms the core of his life and mission.

### **Insights for Our Own Spiritual Journey**

*Encounter–reflection–prolongation* is key to every spiritual tradition as Gutierrez has argued.<sup>5</sup> The same is true of Paul. His spiritual tradition has been handed down to us in the twenty-first century. What do we take from Paul's encounter with the risen Christ for our own lives?

Paul's spiritual transformation through an encounter with the risen Christ is an experience unique to him. Every Christian's journey in life is different—yet the spiritual elements, significant in Paul's life, are characteristic of every Christian's spiritual journey: personal experience of Christ; call and mission; illumination; corporate identity. They are all equally applicable. They are valuable aspects to ponder at the beginning of our reflection on the meaning of Paul's spirituality for us in the twenty-first century. These elements give attention to the foundation of the Christian spiritual life.

While very few people will have as dramatic an encounter with the risen Christ, as both Paul and Luke testify, nevertheless the foundation and well-spring for our spirituality is always the risen Christ.

A few years ago in a project for a class on Christian Spirituality I was teaching, the students were assigned to interview people on campus to find out how they expressed their understanding of spirituality. The students' task was to reflect and comment on these answers and to draw out their own understanding of spirituality. A couple of students went to the then president of Gonzaga University, Fr. Robert Spitzer, SJ,<sup>6</sup> and asked him on camera how he would describe spirituality. Father Spitzer's answer was, "Jesus Christ!" The following silence lasted about 30 seconds. Obviously, the students recording him were somewhat taken aback because that was all he said, and they had been expecting a much longer explanation.

In many ways, this simple yet insightful answer says it all. As Paul shows us, his Christian journey begins with his encounter with Jesus Christ, and this Christ remains the center and heart of his whole life, his spirituality. Christian spirituality has at its root the person of Jesus

Christ who continues to sustain this relationship. Encounter brings with it spiritual transformation.

How do we encounter Christ? Our Christian encounter begins with Baptism. Through Baptism we are born into relationship with Christ and with the Christian community, the Body of Christ. For those baptized as children, it takes time to come to a realization of the full nature of what has happened. For those baptized as adults, there is a unique opportunity of realizing at the beginning of the Christian journey that, like Paul, we are indeed brought into a relationship with the risen Christ—we are “in Christ” who journeys with us throughout our lives. His grace illuminates our paths in relationship to him, to the Body of Christ, and to the world around us. In his letter to the Romans, Paul speaks graphically of our identification with the death and resurrection through baptism:

Or are you unaware that we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. (Rom 6:3-4)

Our encounter with Christ continues throughout our Christian lives. We experience Christ in the reading of the Scriptures (the Word of God), in prayer, in the celebration of the sacraments, in the people whom we encounter daily, and in the dwelling presence of Christ within us. At the heart of our Christian life lies this spiritual encounter with Christ. Christianity cannot claim to be only a philosophy, nor simply a morality: at heart it is spirituality, a spiritual relationship with Christ Jesus. This relationship brings us the illumination of Christ's grace that transforms us within and opens us through grace to work toward the transformation of the Body of Christ and of the world.

These spiritual themes of our relationship with Christ and with the Body of Christ identify what is central to Christian spirituality. Our spiritual lives embrace both a vertical direction (our relationship with Christ) and a horizontal direction (our relationship with one another as the Body of Christ). This is significant to realize at the outset of our exploration of Paul's spirituality for often people say all that is necessary is our relationship to Christ. Both are essential because each gives expression to and relies on the other. This vision corresponds to that of Jesus who stressed the commandment of love that embraces both a love for God and a love for our neighbor. Both directions are vital for a full experience of Christian spirituality.